

Jos. Stevens Seals
AN
E S S A Y

ON THE
CONSUMMATE and INVARIABLE

PERFECTION

OF THE

CATHOLICK-RELIGION

VIZ.



Its Certainty, Reasonableness, Utility, and
Necessity towards the Common Welfare of
Mankind.

S H E W I N G

- I. THE *Meaning* of the Words RELIGION,
and CATHOLICK.
- II. THE Nature, and certain Existence of a *Deity*;
his Regard towards Mankind; and his End, or
Purpose, in the Institution of RELIGION.
- III. DEDUCING thence certain Rules, or Prin-
ciples, for the Determining what are the Genuine
Constituents of RELIGION, and what are
Spurious.
- IV. WHAT are the eternally fix'd, steady, and
invariable Fundamentals of the *Catholick-Religion*;
- V. WHAT was the primitive, or first State of
RELIGION acknowledg'd by Mankind.

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130. f. 107



THE
CONTENTS
OF THE FIRST
ESSAY.

Introduction,



OW Mankind treat each other in respect of their Controversies about Religion. What is the properest Method of proceeding to determine such Controversies.

Section I. A DEFINITION of the Word Religion.

II. REMARKS on the Definition. The original, or proper Acceptation compar'd with the Allegorical Acceptation of the Word. The Name of Religion peculiarly applicab^{le}

A 2

to

iv *The* CONTENTS.

to our Duty of Obedience to God's Will, or Precepts ; exclusive of all Duties, meerly of Civil, or Domestick Authority.

III. THE Meaning of the Word *Catholick*.

Religious Duties of *Catholick*, or universal Obligation distinguish'd from such Religious Duties, as were but of particular and occasional Obligation.

IV. THE respective Natures of the three principal Relatives of the *Catholick* Religion (*viz.* of God, its Author ; of Man, its only Subject ; and of God's End, or Purpose, in the Institution thereof) the most proper Topicks, whence to draw certain Rules, or Principles, for the sure Judging and Deciding what are genuine Duties of the *Catholick* Religion ; and what are Spurious.

V. THE Nature and Attributes of God ; as well such Attributes as are absolute, as those that are relative to Mankind. The Reason why Mankind are peculiarly stiled his Children. God's Benevolence, or Benignity, his darling Attribute.

VI, VII, VIII, IX. ARGUMENTS of the Certainty of the Existence of a Deity ; and of the Absurdity of *Atheism*.

X. THE Inference of the certain Existence, and of the Singularity of the Deity. *Atheism* no Consequence of Free-thinking, but the direct contrary.

XI. THE

The CONTENTS.

v

XI. THE Certainty of those three divine Attributes relative to Mankind, on which is grounded all Religion; *viz.* God's disinterested Goodness, or Benevolence, his impartial Justice, and his invariable Veracity

XII. THE Nature of Man with regard to Religion: Reason the only religious Faculty of Man, and the formal and immediate Subject of Religion.

XIII. GOD'S sole End and Purpose in the Institution of Religion, was the sole and common Welfare of Mankind in Society; without any View of Interest, or Benefit, to himself. Self-denial, why, and how far a moral Virtue and religious Duty.

XIV. GOD'S Regards towards Mankind, altogether Generous and Disinterested; his own Glory and Honour no Motives to the Institution of Religion.

XV. SOME Fundamental Rules, or Principles, drawn from the Nature of those three principal Relatives of Religion, *viz.* its Author, its Subject, and its End, or Purpose.

XVI. CERTAIN Conditions inseparably incident to each primary or immediate Duty of the *Catholick* Religion.

XVII. THE two great moral Duties of universal Justice, or fair Dealing, and universal Benevolence, or Charity; exactly conform to the above-mention'd Rules and Principles;

ciples ; and exactly tally to these two great Rules of the Messiah, *viz.* so to behave to others as we would that others should behave to us ; and to love our Neighbour as ourselves : Under which two great Rules, or Aphorisms, is compriz'd the whole Duty of Mankind towards each other.

XVIII. THE Nature of Justice in general ; its integrant Parts, and its Species, or Branches.

XIX. THE Nature of Charity, or universal Benevolence ; its genuine Extent, and various occasional Degrees.

XX. THE integrant Parts of Charity. Moral Temperance, or Self-denial, a Part of Charity ; its Nature, Use and Purpose.

XXI. CLEMENCY, Patience, Humility, and Compassion, all ingredient Parts of the general Duty of Charity, or universal Benevolence.

XXII. THOSE two great Duties, *1st.* Perfectly congruous to the universal Reason, or Conscience of all Mankind. *2^{dly},* Both constantly and invariably conducive to the sole End, or Purpose of Religion, (*viz.* the common Welfare of Mankind ;) and also adequate, *id est.* both necessary and sufficient thereto. *3^{dly},* Of *Catholick* Obligation, from the first Existence of Mankind.

XXIII, XXIV, XXV. CIVIL Government, and Human Laws, Rewards and Punishments, necessary to the Enforcement of
Morality,

The CONTENTS. vii

Morality, and to restrain the Violations thereof, for the common Welfare of Mankind ; yet not sufficiently effectual to that Purpose, without the Aid of Rewards and Punishments from the most sure Tribunal of divine Justice.

XXVI. THE fundamental and immediate Duties of good Conscience, or unprejudic'd Reason, of uncorrupted Politie, and of uncorrupt Religion, adequately the same.

XXVII. WHY Reason and Religion do so perfectly agree.

XXVIII. FAITH in the steady Veracity and Justice, as well as in the infallible Wisdom and Omnipotence of God, necessary to the Enforcement of Morality. Religious Worship of the Creator likewise necessary to the same Purpose.

XXIX, XXX, XXXI. THE Nature of Religious Faith, in Contra-distinction to Faith in Man ; its End and Effect.

XXXII. THE Nature of Religious Worship, both Spiritual and Corporeal ; its Purpose and Effect.

XXXIII. THE Enforcement of Morality for the common Welfare of Mankind, the only End and Purpose of religious Worship. God himself no wise benefited thereby. God needs no Service, Assistance, or Attendance of Mankind can need no Sacrifices, Gifts, or Offerings, or any Thing whatsoever

viii *The CONTENTS.*

whatsoever from the Bounty of Mankind ; nor can be any wise benefited, or hurt by any Act, or Neglect of Man.

XXXIV. THE gross Absurdities of the *Heathen* Worship, and the Mercenary Corrupt Dispositions of their needy, partial, and capricious Deities render'd them contemptible, and pav'd the Way to *Christianity*.

XXXV. GLORY and Honour really beneficial to Man, but no wise to God. The Use and Purpose of Idolatry, and particularly, of the deify'd Ghosts, or Spirits, of deceas'd Persons.

XXXVI, XXXVII. RELIGIOUS Worship serviceable to Man, and not to God. Religious Worship consists of two Branches only, *viz.* of Supplications and Thanksgivings.

XXXVIII. NO universal, perpetual, and invariable Modes, Forms, or Fashions, of Corporeal Worship, originally establish'd by any divine Precept.

XXXIX, XL. THAT the *Catholick* Religion, in its primitive, or first State, consisted of four universal Duties only, *viz.* of Justice and Charity towards each other universally, and of religious Faith and Worship towards our Creator only.

XLI. JUSTICE and Charity the principal and immediate Duties of Religion ; to which religious Faith and Worship are subservient, as secondary, or ancillary Duties,
as

The CONTENTS. ix

as having been instituted meerly for the Sake, and as Motives, or Enforcements of Morality.

XLII. G O D's occasional Commands (*viz.* such as may have been directed to some particular Persons, on some extraordinary Occasions, and for some particular Purposes) no Part of the *Catholick* Religion. Human Laws, or Ordinances (tho' made for the Enforcement of Morality, or for the Regulating the Administration of publick Justice, or the publick Exercise of the Corporeal Acts of religious Worship; yet) no Part of the *Catholick* Religion. National Religions improperly so call'd.

XLIII T H E Practice (or Profession) of the first Ages of Mankind seem to have been conformable to these *Catholick* Duties.

XLIV. R E L I G I O U S Worship not originally under any partial Restriction, or exclusive Appropriation; but in a Manner truly *Catholick*, Free, and Open to all Mankind alike.

XLV. T H E Duties of Morality how first reveal'd to Mankind.

XLVI. G O D made Himself known to our first Parents, both by the Light of Nature, and by express Revelation.

XLVII, XLVIII. R E L I G I O U S Faith and religious Worship the natural and unavoidable Consequences of knowing God.

- XLIX. RELIGIOUS Worship consisted originally of Supplications and Thanksgivings only; 'till the Understandings of Mankind were so captivated and deprav'd by the Delusions of Idolatry and Priest-craft, as to imagine that God could covet and desire the Wealth and Substance, and stand in need of the Bounties and the Services of Mankind. Spiritual Offerings only reasonable; Corporeal Offerings absurd.
- L. FESTIVAL Commemorations the Origin of religious Sacrifices. The Origin of Versification, or Poetry.
- LI. THE Nature and Manner of the primitive Sacrifices, or Thanksgiving-Feasts.
- LII. SUCH were the Sacrifices of *Cain, Abel, Abraham, and Melchizedeck.*
- LIII. THE Meaning of the Words Holy and Sacred; the Origin of sacred and holy Places, as Groves, Trees, Fountains, Altars, and the like.
- LIV. THE Origin of the Word *Sacrificium.*
- LV. SACRIFICES and Altars, or High-Places, tho' not originally of divine Institution, yet not disapprov'd by God, 'till abus'd to serve the Ends of Avarice and Priest-craft.
- LVI. RELIGION entirely reasonable, good and equally beneficial to all Mankind alike, before the Institution of Idolatry and Priesthood; when first religious Worship was made an exclusive Property, and Religion chang'd

The CONTENTS. xi

chang'd into an Engine of Revenue and Dominion.

LVII. THOSE four *Catholick* Duties originally the only Conditions necessary to Man's Salvation; and the due Observation thereof, the compleat fulfilling of God's Will.

LVIII. THE *Hebrews* the only People that ever had any colourable Pretence to a peculiar national Religion. The primitive System of the *Catholick* Religion so perfect, as to be capable of no Alteration for the better. Whether God did ever institute, or authorize any new *Catholick* Religion; or any wise change, or alter those Conditions of Man's Salvation, which he had once approv'd, fix'd, and establish'd, as both necessary and sufficient thereto.

LIX. NO human Power, or Authority capable of creating any Duty of religious, or *Catholick* Obligation; or of any wise changing, or altering the Conditions of his own, or other Men's Salvation. The *Catholick* Religion capable of no Alteration, but by way, first of Corruption, or Suppression, and then of Reformation and Restauration.

LX. THE *Catholick* Religion first corrupted with the Mixture, and then suppress'd by the Substitution of *Heathenish* Devices. The Reformation wrought by *Moses* partial and imperfect; that by the Messiah, *Catholick* and compleat; he having pluck'd up by

xii *The* CONTENTS.

the Roots whatever Plant his Father had
not planted ; and thereby restor'd the *Ca-*
tholick Religion to its primitive Purity, Sim-
plicity, and Efficacy.



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T H E INTRODUCTION.



AMONGST *so many, and so endless Disputes, Feuds, and Animosities about Religion, that have so miserably disturb'd the Peace of Mankind, and render'd almost totally ineffectual that great Precept of Mutual Charity, or Benevolence, which the Messiah so strenuously inculcated, and declar'd to be the very Badge and Characteristick of his Disciples; each Party dignifying with the specious Title of the Catholick Religion, such System, or Set of Notions, Modes, and Fashions, as their own particular Education, Self-Interest, or Caprice hath recommended to their Option; and then with all the Violence, Outrage, and Fury that biggotted Zeal, and partial Prejudice can inspire, tyrannically imposing the same upon the rest of Mankind, as religious Duties, of Catholick, or universal Obligation; branding,*
persuing,

xiv The INTRODUCTION.

persuading, and maltraiting, as Enemies to God, whoever doth not implicitly submit to the Dictates of Man, and blindly come into all their Sentiments and Measures, as into the Cause and Interests of Heaven; mutually declaring the Notions, Modes, and Fashions of each other, to be odious and detestable in the Sight of God, and worthy of the most rigorous Punishments and Severities; under the Pretence of God's Cause, pursuing their own selfish Ends, wrecking their own Hatred and Revenge upon whoever dares gainsay, or anywise oppose them; to the great Scandal and Disgrace of Religion's sacred Name: Nevertheless, it seems to be generally agreed by all Parties, that there is a genuine Catholick Religion, tho' they can't agree where to fix it; and that there are spurious and corrupt Religions, tho' no Party will acknowledge what themselves espouse, to be so; each Party strenuously asserting such System as themselves espouse, to be Genuine, and justly Conformable to the Primitive, or first State and Standard of the Catholick Religion, boasting the Antiquity, and urging that Antiquity as a sure Argument of the Genuineness of what they profess; and charging all other Parties with Innovation and Variance from the Prototype, or genuine Original. To distinguish, therefore, what is the Genuine, Pure, Undeas'd, or Unmix'd Catholick Religion, from what is Spurious in itself, or Corrupted by heterogeneous Mixtures: As it is an Enquiry of the utmost Importance to the Welfare of Mankind, so doth it require a just Freedom of Thought; a Mind free and discharg'd from

The INTRODUCTION. xv

from all Partiality, Prejudice, or Prepossession ; that will with equal Patience, Candour, and Indifference, examine, weigh, and allow the full Scope and Force of Reason to the Arguments of every Side alike.

A S to the Method of going about such Enquiry, in order to decide and determin what is the genuine Catholick Religion, and what not ; 'tis certainly requisite, first, to consider, what is the true Sense and Meaning of those Words, Religion, and Catholick ; and then to see if there may possibly be found any steady, irrefragable Rules, or Principles, by which, as by an allow'd Standard, we may essay, try, and certainly prove, what is Genuine Religion, and what Spurious ; without which, that Question must remain for ever undetermin'd and unsettled ; and without which there never can be any convictive End, or Decision, of any Controversies whatsoever.

A N D as to the Point of Antiquity, it will be requisite to consider in their respective Order the several States of Religion, according to its several Stages in the World. As in the first Place, what was the Original, Primitive, or first State of Religion in the most early Ages of Mankind, before the Institution of Heathenism, or Idolatry. 2dly, The State of Religion under the Predominance of Heathenism, or Idolatry. 3dly, The State of Religion under the Mosaick OEconomy. And, 4thly, The State thereof under the OEconomy of the Messiah. That by comparing the one with the other, we may see whether Moses or the Messiah, did set up, or institute any new Religion, or only reform

xvi The INTRODUCTION.

reform and restore, or continue what was from the Beginning. Now as to the Sense and Meaning of the Word Religion in its proper and original Acceptation; 'tis as follows, viz.



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ESSAY, &c.

I. **R**ELIGION is a settled Intent, or Disposition of the Mind, to observe duly, in the Conduct of our Lives, such Rules, or Precepts, as we believe were enjoin'd us by our Creator ; with Regard to those Rewards and Punishments that we believe to be annex'd by him to the due Observation, or Violation of those Precepts.

II. THIS seems to be a just Boundary, or Definition of the Sense and Meaning of the Word *Religion*, according to its proper and original Acceptation, as a Habit, or Disposition of the Mind, viz. a Habit of Obedience to the Will, or Precepts of our Creator. As, on one Hand, there seems to be no room to object, that this Definition is too large and comprehensive, as including more than is im-

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ply'd by the Word *Religion*; so neither, on the other Hand, is there any Reason to think it too narrow, in being restrain'd to the Precepts, or Will of the Creator only; the Duty of Obedience to human Precepts, or Ordinances, being, by no Means, to be placed in the same Level with the Duty of Obedience to the Commands of our Creator: Nor can any human Precepts, or Ordinances, be of the same Obligation with those that are divine. Obedience, therefore, to the Will, or Precepts of our Creator, is the genuine Sense and Meaning of the Word *Religion*, in its proper and original Acceptation: But as the Will, or Precepts of God, are the proper and immediate Object of our Religion, or religious Obedience; so, by a very usual Allegory, the Word *Religion* is often taken for those very Rules, or Precepts, which are the proper Object of Religion: Upon which latter Acceptation of the Word, the Question arises, What is genuine Religion, and what spurious? *viz.* What are those divine Rules, or Precepts, which are the proper Object of our religious Obedience?

III. As to the Word *Catholick*, that means universal, or what admits of no Exception; and, as apply'd to Religion, it denotes such Rules, or Precepts, as, by God's Will, are of universal Obligation upon all Persons, in all Places and Times, without exception of any Person, Place, or Time whatsoever; and which
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Catholick, or universal Rules, or Precepts, stand in Contradistinction to such limited, occasional Precepts as God may have enjoin'd to some particular Persons, relating to some particular Purposes and Occasions only; which, therefore, were not by God's Will design'd for Rules of Catholick, or universal Practice, or Obligation, but had Regard to some particular Persons, Purposes, and Occasions only. By the Catholick Religion, therefore, is meant only those Rules, or Precepts, and thence emerging Duties, which, by the Will of God, are of universal Obligation upon all Persons, in all Places and Times, without any Exception whatsoever. So much for the Meaning of the Words Religion and Catholick.

IV. Now, in order to find out some self-evident, demonstrable, or, at least, uncontested Propositions relating to the Matter in Question, for Rules, or Principles, of such steady and irrefragable Certainty, by which, as by an establish'd Standard, to examine, try, and decide what is the genuine Catholick Religion, and what spurious: It may be proper, for that Purpose, to consider duly the several Natures of those Two principal Relatives of the Catholick Religion, *viz.* the Nature of God, its Author, and the Nature of Mankind, its only Subject; and from the Contemplation of their respective Natures, see if there may be found any sufficient Grounds whence to infer, with any Degree of Certainty, what

might be God's End, or Purpose, in the Institution of the Catholick Religion, or in laying any Catholick, or universal Rules, or Commands upon Mankind, whereby to regulate and direct the Conduct of their Lives ; in order, that by the Contemplation of that End, or Purpose, we may be enabled to judge of the Suitableness of the Means suppos'd to be, by God, addestined and directed towards that End, or Purpose: And that by comparing the supposed Duties of the Catholick Religion with its Three principal Relatives, *viz.* with the Nature of its Author, with the Nature of its Subject, and with the Nature of its End, or Purpose: And seeing how far those supposed Duties are agreeable, or repugnant to the Nature of those Relatives, we may be enabled to judge which of those supposed Duties are really genuine Duties of the Catholick Religion, and which of them spurious.

V. As to the Nature, or Essence, of God, he is generally, if not universally, allow'd to be an intelligent, all-wise, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, independent, self-sufficient, all-perfect Being; from whose Power and Wisdom the whole World, and all Things therein, received their Form and Being; whence he is call'd the universal Father and Creator of all Things, and towards Mankind infinitely benevolent; which last Attribute is variously paraphrased in the holy Scriptures: Sometimes by the Words infinitely good, gracious,

cious, merciful ; the God of Love, a tender and indulgent Father, and the like ; Mankind being stil'd, in a peculiar Manner, his Children, as being, after his own Likeness, endued with the Faculty of Reason, and thereby enabled to trace and know their Creator, and to discern 'twixt Moral Good, and Moral Evil ; and which Attribute of his Goodness, or Benevolence, towards Mankind, seems to be the darling Attribute in which he takes most Delight ; and from which doth spring, and on which are grounded these his other Attributes relative to Mankind, *viz.* his Veracity and Justice.

VI. THESE essential Attributes, or Articles of the divine Essence, seem to be uncontestably agreed to by all who do allow the real Existence of a God ; and tho' 'tis commonly suggested, that there be Men, and those of acute Apprehension, and penetrating Judgment, who doubt, or disbelieve the real existence of a God ; yet, upon mature Consideration of the Matter, 'twill appear somewhat hard to come into that Suggestion : 'Tis plainly supposing them, at the same Time, both clear-sighted and stark-blind, both acute, and also stupid to the last Degree. For,

VII. SUPPOSE a curious Piece of Clock-work, with great Variety of Motions, were shew'd to some *Indian*, or other Person, unacquainted with such Works of Art, the various Purposes, to which these Motions answer'd

swer'd respectively ; and also the several Springs, Wheels, and Checks, by which these Motions were excited, measur'd and control'd precisely to these respective Purposes, distinctly indicated and explain'd ; might he not reasonably conclude it to be the Work of some very skilful Artift ? Or, perhaps, thinking it above the Art of Man, he might suppose it to be the Work of some intelligent Being, of more Skill and Power than Mankind was capable of ? This he might reasonably say, and we reasonably expect from him : But, should he, on the contrary, suppose these Movements to be form'd and adjusted so exactly and harmoniously to those Purposes, by some casual, random Conflux of Matter, without the Direction, or Disposition of any intelligent Being, how ridiculous, and absurd, should we think such a Notion ; and how grossly stupid such a Person's Intellectuals ?

VIII. FURTHER, should a Man see a Gamester's Dice, upon Occasion, rise Twenty, Forty, a Hundred Times together, uniformly the very same Casts, all precisely for his Purpose ; or see the Number of his Casts, upon a Wager to such Purpose, rise and fall orderly in regular Sequences ; or see him always have a special Cast to serve his Turn ; and yet suffer himself to be perswaded, that these so regular Events were all meerly fortuitous and casual ; all fair Chance, without any Artifice, or Menage ; should we not justly esteem such a Person

son a ridiculously silly Oaf, admirably qualify'd to be a compleat Cully and a Bubble?

IX. YET, how much more stupid and absurd are those Notions, which some impute to Persons whom they stile Atheists, and yet allow 'em to be Persons of Learning and Sagacity, of absolute Freedom of Thought, and subtle Judgment? Are not the OEconomy and Adjustment of the Parts of even Vegetable, and much more of Animal Bodies, infinitely more curious than any Clock-work, or other Product of human Artifice and Skill? How great is the Variety of Parts? How curiously organiz'd? How justly accommodated to their respective Ends and Purposes? How fine and subtle is the Structure of the Minuter Vessels? What Eye can trace? What Sense discern those infinitely slender Vessels that convey and supply Nourishment and Growth to the Coats of the Capillary Arteries and Veins? How curiously are the Stomach, Mouth, and Bowels, fram'd and fitted for the Confection and Defecation of the Chyle, or Pabulum of the Blood? How well the Heart, the Lungs, the Arteries, and Veins, are adapted for the mixing, and converting into Blood, the Chyle; and for conveying, and circulating that common Principle of Warmth and Nourishment, the Blood, in regular Periods thro' the whole, and every Part of the wonderfully pervious Fabrick? How admirably curious are the Valves, or Sluices, with which the Blood, re-
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turning towards the Heart, is stay'd from regurgitating 'twixt the Vibrations of the Heart, and thereby enforc'd, sometimes, even perpendicularly to ascend, and keep a steady Course? How admirable is the Force of that main Spring of Life, the Heart? How admirable the Reciprocation of the Lungs? How admirable the Texture and Disposition of the Brain and Nerves? How curiously contriv'd for the secreting and dispensing, thro' the whole animated System, those Principles of Sense, and voluntary Motion, the Animal Spirits? In a Word, How justly are all the Parts and Organs of the whole animated Machine adapted to their respective Functions? And how nicely are those various Animal Functions complicated, and accommodated, so as not to interfere, but even mutually to aid and assist each other?

X. CAN all this Harmony of Purposes and Means, so curiously adjusted; repeated thro' so many Periods of Time in each Instance; and propagated uniformly thro' so many Instances; (each Animal and Vegetable repeating, thro' so many successive Ages, the Prestine Resemblance, Form, and essential Properties of its respective Prototype, or Specie;) Can all this manifold Regularity, and perpetual Uniformity of Nature, be imputed to meer blind, random Chance, without the greatest Absurdity of Reasoning? No certainly, no Man of common Sense, who will

will freely and impartially think and reason upon Nature, can believe, that those Means could be so justly, and so constantly adapted to such Purposes, without the Disposition of some intelligent Being ; and that too, of Power and Wisdom infinitely superior to those of Man ; for, even the wisest Man is so far from being skill'd, or able to dispose the Organization of the Child he begets, that he neither can determine and controul, nor even guess its Sex, 'till it is actually form'd, and excluded from the Womb ; which plainly proves the Existence of some Being, or Beings, of superior Power and Skill than Man : And from the constant Uniformity of each several Species of Beings in the World, thro' all successive Ages, without any essential Change, or Alteration, doth obviously arise a convincing Argument, that they are all, and ever were, the Work of One, and the same supreme Artist, without the Controul, or Check, of any other (whether Superior, or Co-ordinate) Being. Now this supreme, intelligent Being, so infinitely superior to Man, in Power and Wisdom, who hath made himself known to Man, not only by his reveal'd Word, but even by the Gift of Reason, or the Light of Nature ; this Being is what we signify by the Name of *God*. Hence, we may justly conclude with the Psalmist, that he is not only in the Moral, but also in the Physical and Literal Sense, a Fool, whoever says in his Heart, *There is no*
C *God ;*

God; and likewise, that Atheism is by no Means a Consequence of Free-thinking, and impartial Reasoning, but the direct contrary.

XI. THE Existence of a Deity being thus evinc'd; in as much as he doth, in no wise, depend, either as to his Existence, or as to his well-being, on the Will, or any Acts of Mankind; Man being neither capable of adding to, or detracting any the least Tittle from his Power, or Beatitude. Those his Attributes, which relate to Mankind, and on which is grounded all Religion, *viz.* his pure and disinterested Benevolence, or Love to Mankind, his impartial and unbyassable Justice, and his unblemish'd Veracity, may, by Course of plain Reasoning, be strongly inferr'd: For, as the only Principles, Motives, or Causes of Malevolence in one intelligent Being towards another, are Hatred and Envy; and as the only Grounds of Hatred and Envy are the actual Suffering, or the Fear of Harm, or Rivalship; since God can neither suffer nor fear any such Thing from Man, 'tis plain he is incapable of any Principle of Malevolence towards Mankind; from whence 'tis necessary, that the Disposition of God towards Man must rest on One of these Two Alternatives, *viz.* meer Indifference and disregard, or pure disinterested Benevolence: And as, on One Side, such absolute Indifference and Disregard to the Welfare of Man, seems very little agreeable to the Care and Skill impended on his

his Formation ; so, on t'other Side, Man's Capacity of Happiness and Misery, beyond all other Creatures, (as being capable not only of Sensual, but also of Contemplative, or Rational Joys, Felicities, and Griefs) seems to denote him form'd to be the properest Object of the divine Bounty and Compassion. And as from God's infinite Wisdom, or Omniscience, it plainly follows, that he can by no Means be inveigled, or deceiv'd ; so, from his Omnipotence, and Self-sufficiency, doth it likewise follow, that he is incapable of being tempted by any Baits, or Allurements, by Hope, by Fear, by partial Love, or Hate, to corrupt his Justice, or to violate his Truth. So much for the Nature and Existence of the Deity, the Author, or efficient Cause of Religion : Next comes, in Course, to be consider'd, Man, the adequate Subject thereof. Now ;

XII. As to the General, or Animal Nature of Mankind, by which he is capable of Pleasure, Ease, and Pain ; by which he is indued with an Instinct, or judicial Faculty to discern what is Physically Good, and conducive to the Welfare of his Body, from what is Physically Evil, or hurtful thereto ; by which he is provided with Appetites to incline him to what is, in that Kind, Good ; and to decline what is in that Kind, Evil ; and with Passions to enforce these Appetites, and excite the other Faculties into Action ; all these Faculties Man has in common with other Animals : But, besides

these, Man alone is endow'd with Reason, a judicial Faculty, capable of discerning Moral Good and Evil. This is the Faculty, in Regard of which, Man is said to resemble his Creator, to be made after the Image of God ; (for no Man, surely, will fancy that God resembles Man in Limbs, and Features, or the like ;) this is that Conscience discerning Good and Evil, that Light of Nature, by which Man is inform'd, and made conscious of Moral Duties, even without the Direction and Impulse of divine Revelation, or human Laws : 'Tis this Faculty alone by which Man is capable of knowing God, and learning of his Will : 'Tis thro' this alone, that Mankind is capable of the united Strength, mutual Defence, Aid, and Comfort of civil Society : 'Tis thro' this, that all other Animals become subservient to Man : Thro' Lack of this alone, all other Animals are incapable of Religion, or Moral Precepts : And thro' this alone it is, that Man is capable thereof ; Reason, or Conscience, being the only religious Faculty of Man. As Religion is the highest Duty, so is Reason the highest Faculty which God has given Man ; and between which there is so strict a Relation and Dependance, that Reason is plainly the formal and immediate Subject, the very Basis and Ground-Plot of Religion : Without Reason, nothing, not even the Species of Man himself, being capable of Religion. So much, as to the
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the Nature of Mankind, with Regard to Religion.

XIII. As to the Third Relative, *viz.* the End, or final Purpose of Religion; from the Contemplation of the respective Natures, or essential Attributes of God and Man, it may be firmly concluded, that in instituting Religion, the sole and adequate End and Purpose of the Creator, was the Sake and mutual Welfare of Mankind in Society: For, first, as God is an Intelligent All-wise Being, 'twere absurd to suppose, that he would impose any Duties, or Commands, on Man, to no Boot, or Purpose; without any End, to which these Duties were directed as a Means. Secondly, as God can be neither better'd, nor worsted, in his own Condition, by any Thing that can be done, omitted, or neglected, by Mankind; it may be certainly inferr'd, That in the Institution of Religion, God could have no Self-Interest, or Self-End in View; that he did not institute it in any wise for his own Sake, or Benefit; but was wholly disinterested therein. Thirdly, as the Dread, or Indignation of Rivalship, or Superiority, the Consciousness of past, and Fear of future Harm, being the only Grounds of Envy and Hatred, are no wise incident to an Omnipotent, All-perfect Being; 'twere no less absurd than impious, to suppose, that our most gracious Creator had laid any Commands on Man, with any envious, or malevolent Intent. Whence it plainly follows,

follows, that in imposing his Commands upon Mankind, the sole Purpose, Intent, and View, of our no less gracious than wise Legislator, was solely, and purely, the Welfare of Mankind itself. And, Fourthly, as Mankind is capable of much more Happiness and Comfort in Society, than in a separate, solitary, savage State of Life; so, in such separate, or savage State, Man seems to need no other Motives, or Inducements, to preserve and promote his own Well-being, but those common, and universally innate Principles of Instinct and Self-Love: And, indeed, Precepts, Laws, Rewards, and Punishments, to enforce the Principle of Self-Interest, or Self-Love, seems altogether needless and absurd. Hence it plainly follows, that in our gracious Creator's laying his Commands upon Mankind alone, of all his Creatures, his sole Intent, and View, was thereby so to regulate their Conduct toward each other, as best might suit their mutual Happiness and Comfort in Society; so to moderate and restrain that common, and altogether necessary Principle of Self-Love, and so to temper and bound the same with that sociable, and most fundamental Principle of Religion, Charity, Generosity, or general Benevolence, to all our Fellow-Creatures of Mankind; that none may sacrifice, to his own Appetites, the Welfare of another; but may concert, aid, and mutually promote the Welfare of each other: And which is the Ground,
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and a plain, and adequate Reason, why Self-Denial, or the Curbing, and Restraint of our too partial, enormous, or irregular Appetites and Passions, is a necessary, and religious Duty : Nor can it be suppos'd, that a gracious God can envy, or deny to his Creatures, any Use of those Faculties, or the Enjoyment of those Blessings, which he has bestow'd on them ; other than such as might be offensive and injurious to our Neighbour, and pernicious to Society ; God, plainly, taking no Delight (like savage Tyrants upon Earth) in any the Afflictions, Misery, or Unhappiness ; but rather in the common Happiness and Welfare of Mankind ; such savage, and malicious Delight, being an Attribute much rather applicable to the Malevolence of an Enemy, and Destroyer ; than to the allow'd, and uncontested Benignity of an infinitely good and gracious Father and Creator.

XIV. PERHAPS it may be objected, that in laying his Commands on Man, the sole, or, at the least, chief End, and Purpose of God, was his own Glory. But if, by that Word, *Glory*, they mean any Benefit towards himself, that God propos'd therein, 'tis plainly absurd ; 'tis inconsistent with the All-sufficiency, and Perfection of his Essence, and with his Omnipotence, to be capable of lacking, or desiring any Thing for himself ; and much more to depend upon the Will of Man, or of any other Being, for the obtaining, or conserving any
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Thing that he could desire. To suppose, that God has any Self-End, any Purpose for his own Sake to be serv'd, in his Commands to Man, is a Notion too ungenerous, of too debased Alloy, to quadrate with an All-sufficient, Independent, and infinitely Benevolent Being : As tho' his Love was bounded by his Interest, and his infinite Goodness could be circumscrib'd, and contracted to the same scanty Measure, and be grounded upon the same narrow Basis, with the corrupt Love, and Friendship of the most ungenerous, and partially self-ended of Mankind. Such Notions are incompetible to, and altogether unbecoming our August Creator ; his disinterested Regard for the Welfare of Mankind, the chief and principal Work of his Creation, being, plainly, the only View, and Motive, worthy of himself, and answerable to the Infinity of his Goodness to Mankind. So that we may very reasonably acquiesce in the foremention'd Conclusion, *viz.* That the adequate End, and Purpose of Religion, as instituted by God, is the common Welfare of Mankind in Society.

XV. Now, as Reason is the only religious Faculty of Man ; the formal, and immediate Subject, the very Basis, or Ground-Plot, of Religion ; without which, nothing, not even the Species of Man himself, could be capable of Religion : And as no Agent whatever, in matching and suiting the Nature of Things, each

each aptly to the other, can come up to the Wisdom of the Creator ; hence we may certainly assume it for a steady, and irrefragable Rule, or Principle, that whatever is a fundamental Duty of the Catholick Religion, must be justly congruous to that Faculty of Man, which is the formal, and immediate Subject of Religion ; and, by Means of which, only Mankind is capable of Religion, *viz.* to the Faculty of Reason. And, Secondly, as in all Cases, the final End, or Purpose, of any Design, or Institution, is ever the Criterion Rule, or Standard, whereby to judge of the respective Means ; we may, likewise, assuredly take it for another steady, and irrefragable Rule, or Principle, that whatever is a fundamental Duty of the Catholick Religion, must be constantly, and invariably conducive, or expedient to the final End, or Purpose of the Catholick Religion, *viz.* to the common Welfare of Mankind ; and *é reverso* that whatever is not conducive, or is useless towards that Purpose, and much more whatever is noxious thereto, cannot be any Duty of the Catholick Religion ; the one as being no wise applicable as a Means, and the other as being repugnant to the End, or final Purpose of its Institution. And, Thirdly, as the Nature of Mankind hath, from its Creation, ever been immutably, and invariably, the same ; and as the Nature of God is, from and to all Eternity, ever immutably, and invariably, the

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same ; so his eternal Will, Mind, or Disposition towards Mankind in general, and his eternal Purpose in the Institution of the Catholick Religion, must be ever immutably, and invariably the same ; and, consequently, the fundamental Duties, or Means, by him addestin'd, and directed to that Purpose, must ever be immutably, and invariably the same. For inasmuch as the Subject, and Occasion of Instituting the Catholick Religion, *viz.* human Nature, hath not, at any Time since its Creation, been any wise alter'd by the Creator ; and inasmuch as the Wisdom of God could not be, in any Degree, mistaken in the Nature and Efficacy of the Means by him addestin'd towards his own End, or Purpose ; there could be no Reason why he should shift, or vary, either the respective Purpose, or the Means thereto directed. From which Consideration seems to have sprung that noted Aphorism of the Schools, that the Nature of Good and Evil (*viz.* Moral Good and Evil) are immutable. Hence, we may assuredly assume it for a steady, and irrefragable, Rule, or Principle, that the genuine Fundamentals of the Catholick Religion are co-eval with human Nature, and ever were, and ever must be, immutably, and invariably, the same. And, accordingly, St. *John*, in his First General Epistle, Ch. 13th, Verse 11th ; and in his Second General Epistle, Verses the 5th and 6th, he tells us, That the Duties which he taught,

taught, were no Novelties ; but what had been Duties, even from the Beginning.

XVI. **W H A T E V E R**, therefore, is truly, and genuinely, a fundamental Duty of the Catholick, or universal Religion, must have these Three inseparable Conditions, or Qualifications, *viz.* First, it must be well consistent with, and justly congruous to Reason, the only religious Faculty of Man ; Secondly, it must be constantly, and invariably, conducive, or expedient towards the constant, and invariable End, and Purpose of the Catholick Religion, *viz.* towards the common Welfare of Mankind ; and, Thirdly, that it hath been co-eval with human Nature, *viz.* that it hath been a religious Duty of Catholick, or Universal Obligation, even from the first Existence of Mankind.

XVII. Now, as these Principles are so clear and evident, that no one can, without the grossest Prejudice and Partiality, disallow them ; so, by comparing to them these Two great social Duties of universal Justice, or fair Dealing, and universal Benevolence, or Charity, (which, by a common Appellation, are usually call'd Morality, Moral Duty, or Moral Virtue) we shall find them Two great Duties, in all Respects, conformable to those so certain, and irrefragable Principles ; and which Two great and universal Duties, do justly tally to these Two great and universal Rules lay'd down by the Messiah, *viz.* So to behave ourselves,

selves, in every Respect, to others, as we would that others should behave to us; and also, so to love our Neighbour, as we love ourselves: Under which Two great Rules, or Aphorisms, he comprizes our whole Duty towards our Neighbour; that is, our mutual Duties towards each other. As to the Sense, or Meaning of the Words, Justice, and Charity.

XVIII. JUSTICE is a steady Resolution, or constant Disposition of Mind, to do to every Person so, and no otherwise, than as we should (upon a Parity of Circumstances, turning, as 'twere, the Tables) deem fair, and reasonable, to be done to ourselves; and it consists of Two Articles, or integrant Parts, the one Privative, *viz.* to do no Wrong, or Injury, to any Person; the other Positive, *viz.* to perform to every one what is Right and Due. Justice may be distributed into divers Species, according to the Diversity of Cases, and Relations of Mankind to each other: So Obedience to the Magistrate, according (or in Proportion) to his Authority, is the Right of the Magistrate, and due from the Subject: And, on t'other Side, 'tis the Duty of the Magistrate, not to oppress, but, impartially, to protect the Subjects, diligently defending, and redressing Wrongs, and impartially dispensing Rewards and Punishments, duly proportionate to Merits and Offences, according to the Extent of his Authority; the Violation of any of which Duties, is immediately injurious to
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some, and, consequentially pernicious to the whole Community. So likewise, Veracity, Sincerity, Fidelity, or Trustiness, and the like, come directly under the Head of Justice; for, as our Neighbour may be injur'd by Fraud, as well as by Force, or Violence; so all Falshood and Deceit, all concealing, or disguising the Truth, designedly, or even wittingly tending to the Detriment of our Neighbour, is plainly contrary to Justice; as being what we should not approve, if so done to ourselves.

XIX. BY the Word, Charity, is not to be understood that narrow Notion of Almsgiving, the Effect, many Times, of Ostentation, more than any Commiseration, or Good-will towards the Person: But, by Charity, according, to the just Amplitude of the Word, is to be understood, a constant and steady Habit of Benevolence, Generosity, Good-will, or friendly Disposition towards our Neighbour; that is, towards all Mankind in general, without Discriminations, and Exceptions of Nations, Countries, Customs, Usages, Complexions, or the like unhuman, as well as Unchristian Prejudices. Now, tho' our Charity, or Good-will, is, in a general Manner, due to all Mankind; yet is it, in a more peculiar Manner, and in a higher Degree than ordinary, due towards some Persons than to others, according to the Relation in which such Persons do respectively stand towards us; so, namely,

namely, there is a peculiar and extraordinary Degree of Good-will, Benevolence, or Affection, due between Parents and Children, Magistrate and Subject, Servants and Masters; so, likewise, is there due, a peculiar and extraordinary Degree of our Good-will and Affection towards them, who have been our Friends and Benefactors. As the peculiar Obedience due from Subjects towards their Sovereign, or chief Magistrate, is usually call'd, their Allegiance; so, likewise, the peculiar Affection, and Good-will, due, by them, to him, is, for the same Reason, usually call'd by the Name of Loyalty, and the Breach thereof, Disloyalty; both the one and the other being generally regulated by the Laws of the respective Place, or Country. That peculiar Affection that is due from Children to their Parents, is usually distinguish'd by the Name of Piety; as is also that grateful Regard which is due from Mankind towards their common Father and Creator. That extraordinary, or peculiar Affection, and Good-will, that is due to our Friends and Benefactors, is distinguish'd by the Name of Gratitude, or Gratefulness; and the Neglect, or Violation thereof, by the Names of Ingratitude, or Ungratefulness.

XX. As Justice, so, likewise, doth Charity, Generosity, or general Benevolence, consist of Two integrant Parts; the one Positive, *viz.* Beneficence, or a constant, steady Disposition

sition of doing all such friendly Acts, or good Offices, as may be necessary to the Welfare of our Neighbour: The other Privative, *viz.* Self-Denial, Moderation, or Moral Temperance; being a constant, steady Disposition of abstaining, or refraining from all such Acts as may be hurtful, or repugnant to the Welfare of our Neighbour. Now, the Moral Duty of Temperance, Moderation, or Self-Denial, (stil'd by the Messiah, the Mortification of our evil Lusts and Affections) doth not consist in so regulating the Use of those Blessings, which our gracious Creator hath bestow'd on us for the Support, and Comfort of our Lives, in such Measure, and Manner, as may best conduce to the Health, Strength, and Vigour of our Persons; such being a meerly Physical, and no wise Moral Consideration; such Restraint being, indeed, a Part of Prudence and Self-Love, but no social Duty; the very Essence of Temperance, or Self-Denial, as a Moral and Religious Duty, consisting in the moderating, and restraining our Appetites, and Passions, thro' a friendly Regard towards our Neighbour, gratifying, and indulging our Appetites, and Passions, in such a Manner and Measure only, and so regulating ourselves in the Enjoyment of those Blessings, as may not be hurtful to our Neighbour, or pernicious to Society; in which Sense only, 'tis that God hath commanded us to mortify our evil Lusts and Affections: The gratifying, or indulging
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our Appetites, or Affections, in such Manner, as may well comport both with the Welfare of our private Neighbour, and of the Publick, or whole Community in which we live ; being no wise interdicted, or restrain'd : Neither can our all-gracious Creator any wise envy, or deny to his Creatures any Use or Enjoyment of those Faculties, and Blessings, which he hath bestow'd on them ; other than such, whereby they may be hurtful, or offensive, to one another.

XXI. THIS general Duty of Charity branches out into several particular Duties, all necessary to the Completion thereof ; as Clemency, Patience, Humility, and Compassion ; of which, Clemency, and Patience, are Duties of moderating, and restraining our Anger, Hatred, and Revenge, thro' a friendly Regard to our Neighbour, and a tender Consideration of the Frailties, and Infirmities of human Nature. Clemency, or Mercifulness, is a constant, steady Disposition to abstain from Cruelty, Revenge, and all unnecessary Rigours, and Severities towards our Neighbour ; a friendly, forgiving Temper of Mind, seeking no Retaliation of Injuries, nor inflicting any Punishment for the Revenge of what is past ; nor any otherwise, than may be necessary for the Prevention of future Wrongs. Moral Patience, call'd in the holy Scriptures, Meekness of Spirit, Long-suffering, Slowness to Wrath, or Anger, is a constant, steady Disposition

Disposition to bear, in a friendly Manner, with the Infirmities, Failings, and Provocations of our Neighbour, seeking to overcome Evil with Good, and no wise returning Evil for Evil, other than so far as is necessary to Justice and Self-Preservation. Humility, in the Moral Acceptation of the Word, is a constant Disposition to treat one another with a friendly Gentleness, Courtesy, and Affability, avoiding all haughty, proud, disdainful Moroseness, Scorn, Contempt, and contumelious Behaviour, that may irritate, provoke, or grieve our Neighbour. Moral Compassion, or Fellow-feeling with our Neighbour, is a friendly Disposition to rejoice, or be glad, at our Neighbour's Prosperity, or Welfare, as at our own; and to be sorry for his Misfortunes, as for our own: In which Sense it is, that *St. Paul* bids the *Romans* rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Compassion, in the Moral Acceptation of the Word, consisting of Two Branches, *viz.* Congratulation, and Commiseration, and is directly opposite to Envy and Malice, which rejoices at the Mishaps, and repines at the Happiness and Welfare of our Neighbour.

XXII. Now, if we compare and examine these Two great Duties of Justice, and Charity, in their full Extent, as above stated, with the Standard Rules above-mention'd, we shall find them perfectly agreeable thereto. As, First, we shall find them not only well con-

sistent with, but also so perfectly congruous to the universal Reason and Conscience of Mankind; that no Nation, or People, have been found so barbarous, and stupid, as not to allow and approve them under some, or other Denomination; to praise them as Moral Virtues, at least, if not to profess them as religious Duties: Whereupon, the learned Apostle, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, remarks to them, Chap. 2d. Ver. the 14th and 15th, That were there no express Law, (human, or divine) yet the Light of Nature would be a sufficient Guide, our Consciences informing what is Good, and what is Evil. And, Secondly, we shall find them not only constantly, and invariably, conducive, and expedient to that great and sole End of true Religion, *viz.* the common Welfare of Society; but that, also, in the most perfect and compleat Manner, as being universally, equally, and impartially beneficial to all Mankind alike; and also, in the highest Degree, beneficial to Mankind, as rendering them both just and friendly to one another, which is the very End of all Moral Laws, both human and divine; and to which End these Two great Duties, Justice and Charity, are adequately available, as being both necessary and sufficient thereunto: For tho' strict Justice, which avails much towards the Welfare and Happiness of Society, is not alone sufficient to that Purpose; yet, whatever is wanting in strict Justice alone, is fully supply'd

ply'd, and made out by Charity ; as St. *Paul* observes in the 13th Chap. of his Epistle to the *Romans*, Verses the 8th, 9th, and 10th ; wherefore he calls it, in his Epistle to the *Collossians*, Chap. the 3d, Verse the 14th, *The Band of all Perfection* : And declares it to be *The End, the Fulfilling, and Accomplishment, both of the Law and the Gospel* ; *Romans*, Chap. 13, Verses the 8th, 9th, and 10th. Also *Galatians*, Chap. 5th, Verse 14th ; and 1st *Timothy*, Chap. 1st, Verse 5th. Wherein he is likewise confirm'd by the Words of the Messiah himself, *Matthew*, Chap. 7th, Verse the 12th ; and Chap. 19, Verses the 16, 17, 18, and 19th. And, Thirdly, as these Two great Moral Duties were equally necessary to the Happiness and Welfare of Society (the great and sole End of true Religion) as well in the Beginning, as in latter Times ; 'tis certain, that they were Duties of Catholick Obligation, even from the Beginning, and co-eval with human Nature itself. These Two great Duties, therefore, of Morality, are the only primary, and immediate Duties of the Catholick Religion ; which are both necessary, and, in their own Nature, sufficient to the sole End and Purpose thereof, *viz.* the Happiness and Welfare of Society : For, would all Mankind strictly observe the Duties of Justice and Charity, in their full Extent, according to the Dictates of impartial Reason, and unprejudic'd Conscience, without any farther Mo-

tive, Mankind might be as happy as any Precepts, Rules, or Laws could make 'em. In such a Case, all express Laws, both human and divine, all Rewards and Punishments, all Civil Government, and religious Awe, were meerly usefess and superfluous ; their common End, and Purpose, *viz.* the Happiness, and Welfare of Society, being fully attain'd without their Aid.

XXIII. BUT, forasmuch as Mankind is plainly subject, and but too prone to suffer themselves to be seduc'd, by the Influence of divers Temptations, to swerve from the Dictates of their own Consciences ; therefore, besides the bare Knowledge of Right and Wrong, of what is Morally Good and Evil, some further Motives were plainly requisite to ballance against those Temptations, to keep Mankind up to the Observance of those so necessary Duties, and to deter them from the Violation of the same : For this Purpose was instituted, Civil Magistracy and Dominion ; and so these same Social Duties, which, in the *First Instance*, were the Laws of Conscience, and Rules of impartial Reason, (and which are, by *St. Paul*, call'd, *The Laws of Nature*) receive the Sanction of Civil Authority, and do become Laws Political, enforc'd by Political Rewards and Punishments.

XXIV. YET, how often do egregious Crimes escape the Penalties ordain'd by human Laws ? The Magistrate can punish so far

far only, as Offences can be manifestly known, and prov'd : And how often are the Springs of Villany and Mischief kept secret, and deep hid by wary Craft ? How oft doth Fraud beguile, do Bribes corrupt, doth partial Enmity, or Favour, sway ; or Fear of factious and illegal Force, o'erbear the Justice of the Magistrate ? Thus Civil Magistracy, or Government, tho' very useful, and even necessary towards this Purpose ; yet is, plainly, not sufficient to effect the same compleatly, without some further Means. Wherefore, our gracious, and all-wise Creator hath vouchsafed to add a further Weight to these so necessary Duties, by giving them the further Sanction of Religion, or divine Precept, making them his Laws, by exprefs Revelation, and enforcing them by divine Rewards, and Punishments, to be awarded from his own dread, and impartial Tribunal ; whose Cognizance no subtle Craft, clandestine Deeds, or even silent Thoughts, and Wishes, can escape ; whose steady Justice no Fraud can deceive, no Bribe can byass, no partial Passion, or Affection, sway ; no Threats, no Force, no Fear, can any way rebate.

XXV. THIS is the surest, and most effectual Means, to enforce the Dictates of impartial Conscience, or Reason : The Civil Magistrate can only watch over, and control the outward Acts, as obvious to the Organs of outward Sense ; but Religion, or the Laws of Conscience,

Conscience, enforc'd by Rewards and Punishments divine, doth justly temper, regulate, and modify the Thoughts and Affections, the very Springs, and secret Motives of the outward Acts, so as to answer the common End of Conscience, of Civil Government, and of Religion. For, to what End was Man endued with Conscience, or impartial Reason? Was Government, or human Dominion instituted? For what did God ordain Religion; but for the common Good of Man, as hath been argued above.

XXVI. HENCE we may observe, that the fundamental, (*id est*, constant, and unalterable) and immediate Duties of Conscience, or unprejudic'd and impartial Reason, of uncorrupted Politie, and of uncorrupted, and unbyass'd Religion, do justly coincide; and are the very same Thing, under different Aspects, and enforc'd by different Motives, and Considerations, *viz.* Morality, or Moral Virtue.

XXVII. NOR can it be thought strange, that Reason and Religion should so agree; if we consider, that the Gift of Reason, and of Religion, did both proceed from the same All-wise Author; were both implanted adequately in the same Subject; and both inseparably destin'd towards the same End, or Purpose: That it, rather, would have been strange, had our All-wise Creator enjoin'd any Thing, as a religious Duty, that was unreasonable, and discordant to the very Foundation
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and Ground-work, that he himself had laid, to make Man capable of Religion, *viz.* the Faculty of Reason : For why is not a Horse, an Ox, an Ass, taught to know their Creator, and the Duties of Religion ? Why are they incapable ? But only that they have not Reason. So much as to the primary, and immediate Duties of Religion.

XXVIII. Now, tho' the Duties of Morality, in their own Nature, are adequate to, and sufficient for the Happiness and Welfare of Society ; yet, inasmuch as to keep Man up to the just Observance, and to deter him from the Violation of those Moral Duties, Rewards and Punishments divine, as well as human, are necessary : So, forasmuch as these important Considerations of divine Rewards and Punishments, can have but little, or no Avail, when there is any Dis-belief, or Doubt of the inevitable Certainty of them ; therefore, Faith, or a full Trust and Confidence in the invariable Justice, and Veracity, as well as in the Wisdom and Omnipotence of God, is a necessary Means to the due Enforcement of these Moral Duties. Again, tho' the inevitable Certainty of divine Rewards and Punishments, should be never so firmly believ'd and credited ; yet, when they are out of Thought and Mind, they have little or no Influence on the Conduct of Mens Actions : Therefore, religious Worship, in order to keep God, and his Judgments, so constantly

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in our Thoughts, as to have a due Influence on our Moral Conduct, is, likewise, another necessary Duty of Religion. The Moral Duties of Justice and Charity are, indeed, the principal, and immediate Duties of Religion, as which immediately effect the End, or Purpose, thereof: And religious Faith, and Worship, are but as Ancillary Duties, and Secondary Means, which, of their own Nature, without Morality, could, by no Means, effect the Happiness of Mankind in Society; but which do really, and effectually, conduce thereto, by being subservient as Motives, and as Enforcements to those principal and immediate Duties.

XXIX. Religious Faith, therefore, or Faith so far as it is a religious Duty, is not a Trust, or Confidence in Man; for the holy Scriptures expressly warn us not to put our Trust in Man, *id est*, not to make Man the Object of our religious Faith; but 'tis a full Trust and Confidence in the Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Veracity of God, who neither can be deceiv'd, nor will deceive; but who both can, and will impartially award, and apply Rewards and Punishments, without Exception, or Respect of Persons, to every one according to his Works: Or, in other Words, according to their observing, and keeping up to, or violating, and deviating from those Precepts which he had prescribed to them for the Regulation of their Conduct towards each other,
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XXX. THE immediate Objects, therefore, of religious Faith, are the Wiſdom, Power, Veracity, and Juſtice of God; and thence, by a neceſſary Conſequence, deriv'd to his reveal'd Word: For whoever truſts in the inſallible Wiſdom, Power, and Veracity of God, can never doubt the Truth of his reveal'd Word; and for this Reaſon religious Faith, or Credit, was given to the Revelations of our Saviour, and the Prophets of Old; not as to the Words of Men of ſuperior human Faculties, or Learning: But as to the Word of God, deliver'd by the Mouths of Men, divinely inſpir'd for that Purpoſe; and that Faith, or Credit, was ſafely founded upon thoſe ſurely divine Credentials, *viz.* the Uprightneſs of their Morals, both in Doctrine and in Practice, enforc'd and ſeconded by the Gift, and Power of doing miraculous Works; Works obvious to the Senſes, and Underſtandings of Mankind; yet much beyond the Power of meer human Faculties to effect. But without ſuch ſure Credentials to apply religious Faith to the Word of Man, would not only be a Part of very imprudent, and dangerous Credulity, ſubjecting ourſelves to all Manner of Impoſtures, Deluſions, and Seductions; but would be, alſo, a ſinful, and idolatrous Miſapplication of that Faith, and Confidence to the Creature, which is peculiarly due to the

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Creator only.: (the Sin commonly denoted by the Word Idolatry, plainly consisting in the misapplying religious Faith, as well as religious Worship, and do generally go together; for who can sincerely apply religious Worship to any Thing, in which he hath not a religious Faith?) 'Tis plainly putting that Trust and Confidence in Man, that is expressly forbid by the holy Scripture. And, on the other Hand, for any Person, without such Authority and Credentials, to claim religious Faith, as due to his own Word, would be a most impious, and audacious Presumption.

XXXI. ACCORDINGLY, our Saviour himself, reproaching the Infidelity of the *Jews*, appeals to their own Senses; declaring, that if he himself had not done among them such Works, as were beyond the Power of Man to do, they had not been guilty of a Sin, in not giving him Faith, or Credit, that he was sent by God to teach his Word: And where the *Jews* charge him with doing Miracles by a diabolical Power; and also where he warns his Disciples against false Prophets, and sham Miracle-Mongers; he refers them to their own Reason, bidding them to judge the Tree by the Fruits.

XXXII. THE Duty of religious Worship, so as ordain'd by God, seems to be a meer Act of the Mind; namely, a constant Contemplation of God, and his Laws, or Precepts, in order to keep up to the due Observance, and avoid the Violation of the same, for the common

mon Welfare of Mankind: But, as the Affections of the Mind do usually break forth into outward Acts, and such outward Acts have usually an Effect on the Minds of others; so the outward Worship of God may well consist of any sort of decent Acts, by which we seriously re-call into our own, and others Minds, the Contemplation of God, and of the Duties which he hath enjoin'd for the common Welfare of Mankind, and of those Rewards and Punishments, which he has promis'd and denounc'd, as Motives to enforce the due Observance of the same.

XXXIII. As to the End, or Purpose, of religious Worship; the enforcing of Morality, for the common Welfare of Mankind, seems to be a Purpose truly religious, truly consonant to the Nature and Attributes of God, and worthy of an infinitely gracious, benevolent, and disinterested Father of Mankind: And the religious Worship of the true God, is, plainly, a very opposite and effectual Means towards that End, or Purpose, and well-becoming the Judgment of an All-wise Being. But, as to the vulgar, crude Notion, that the ultimate, and sole End, and Purpose, of religious Worship, is the Honour and Glory of God; esteeming the outward Worship of God to be the chief, the highest, and most important Duty of Religion, and therefore chusing to neglect any, the immediate Duties of Morality, *viz.* of serving, or doing any

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good Office to our Neighbour, on Pretence of serving God, or doing God Service, as they most absurdly Phrase it: Let them remember, that God needs no Service from them; nor can they do him any real Service, or Benefit; but when they have done their utmost, they are still but unprofitable Servants, as to him. Nor is it consistent with the Nature of an All-wise Being, to order Means for no Purpose, or such Means as are improper, and unavailable to the respective Purpose. Let them consider how unworthy, and unbecoming, an Omnipotent, All-sufficient, All-wise God, must be the Notion, that his Interest, and Welfare, should, in any wise, interfere with any the Interests, or Welfare of his Creatures; and that he instituted Religion, in general, or religious Worship, in particular, purely for his own Glory, or Honour, or with any other self-ended View. How absurd a Speculation is it, to impute to an All-perfect, Self-sufficient, and Immutable Being, such Passions, Affections, and Appetites, as denote Want, and Imperfection; and even such as, in ourselves, are reputed as Infirmities, and Blemishes in the Characters of mortal Men; such as to desire, covet, and be delighted with Gifts, Presents, and Offerings? To take Pride, and vainly Glory in gawdy Pomp, and Pageantry: And in the Praises, Reverences, and Worship (or, as, in other Cases, we should call it, the Flatteries, and Courtship) of Men. To be wrathful,

ful, and angry at the Neglect, or Omission of such Honours and Worship. To fear, or be uneasy at the Diminution, or Alteration of any Acts, or Forms thereof. Or to need the Aid of fiery Zeal, and headlong Bigots, to vindicate his Cause, and to be his Champions in ruining, and destroying their Fellow-Mortals, as formidable Enemies to an Omnipotent God. Can an All-perfect, Self-sufficient, Omnipotent Being, need any Offerings, Presents, or Alotments of Places for his own Use? Can he want Habitation, Food, or Rayment, for himself, and depend upon the Bounty of his own Creatures for the same? Can he stand in Need of, covet, or fear any Act, or Omission of his Creatures? Can an All-perfect, and immutable Being, be capable of any Access of Happiness, Delight, or Pleasure? Of any Access of Misery, Grief, or Pain? Of any Passion, or Alteration? 'Tis plain those Expressions in the holy Scriptures, of God's being pleas'd, or displeas'd, can mean only his Approbation, or Disapprobation of Means, with Respect to the End propos'd; and nothing like those Acts of Sense and Passion, incident to Mankind.

XXXIV. 'T WAS such absurd Notions as these, that made the wisest of the antient Heathens despise those Objects, which the Vulgar so stupidly rever'd, and worship'd, as Gods; and pav'd the Way for the Propagation of the *Christian* Religion. For what a contemptible

contemptable Notion of the Gods must any thinking Person conceive, if he can suppose them to be affected with the like Passions and Follies as Mankind are subject to? To be vainly pleas'd, and glory in the humble Cringes, and Adulations of their Creatures, and Dependants; to be delighted with the Blood of Beasts, and Smoak of reeking Altars; to be wrathful, peevish, angry, and revengeful, upon any Neglect, or Mismanagement of such Affairs; that their Favour was venal, and might be purchas'd; and their Justice aton'd, satisfy'd, and commuted, for by Gifts, Offerings, Bribes, and mercenary Compositions: Instead of disinterested, and graciously munificent Benefactors to Mankind; to play the Part of crafty, self-interested, mercenary Traffickers for Wealth and Honour; and such like Notions; absurd enough, as apply'd to those imaginary Deities; but much more so, when apply'd to the true God; as being altogether inconsistent with the compleat Perfection, Self-sufficiency, Wisdom, and Justice of the Supreme, Omnipotent, Unrival'd Being.

XXXV. As to the Point of Glory and Honour, to come closer thereto; Man, indeed, may reasonably covet Glory, and Delight in the Honours, Praises, and Courtship of Men; as being not only the Signs, and Tokens, but also a Means of acquiring, propagating, and preserving the Esteem of Men; and,

and, thereby, of prevailing, and succeeding in his Undertakings : Whereas, on the other Hand, Infamy, Dis-esteem, Contempt, and the like, are great Obstacles to Success in human Affairs ; but all Love, and Desire of Honour, and Praise, beyond such Purpose, is deem'd meer Vanity, and Folly, even in Mankind. And, as an Omnipotent Being can neither fear such Obstacles, nor lack such Aids ; so neither, to an All-wise Being, can Vanity, and Folly, be, in any wise, incident. Such Notions of human-like Wants, Passions, and Affections, of real Benefit, Service, Dis-service, and the like, are much more suitable to the superstitious Worship of the Shades, or Ghosts of dead Men and Women ; of heathenish Deities, and modern Saints (deceas'd Mortals both ; both idoliz'd alike ;) who may be suppos'd, by their bigotted Votaries, to be delighted, and offended by the like Means and Objects, as when alive, and conversant with Mankind ; and the Interests, Views, and Passions, imputed to them, may be much more serviceable, and agreeable to the selfish Ends of crafty Priests, than the disinterested Precepts of an Omnipotent, Self-sufficient, and All-benevolent Being. Which is a very obvious Reason why Priest-craft hath ever, as it were, a natural Tendency towards Superstition and Idolatry.

XXXVI. SINCE, then, our Creator can receive no real Benefit of Service from such Acts,

Acts, as are call'd Worship, or serving of God; but which Acts may apparently operate, and tend towards the Benefit of Mankind; 'tis much more reasonable to refer them, as Means towards the Service, Benefit, and Welfare of Mankind, towards which they may be available, than toward the Benefit, Service, and Welfare of God; towards which they cannot, in the least, contribute, or avail.

XXXVII. RELIGIOUS Worship, so far as it is an Act of the Mind, seems to consist of Two genuine Branches, *viz.* of Supplication, *id est*, Humiliation, and Prayer for such Things as we lack; and of rejoicing, and Thanksgiving for the Blessings we have receiv'd. For, as Humiliation is the genuine Attendant of Prayers, or Supplications; so rejoicing is the natural Attendant of Thanksgiving.

XXXVIII. As to the Sounds of the Voice, the Postures, Acts, and Gestures of the Body, and the like, by which those Affections of the Mind are express'd, and represented to the Senses; it doth no wise appear, that any certain Rules, Modes, or Fashions of those Matters, were originally fix'd, and invariably determin'd, by any universal, and perpetual Decree, or Precept, of the Creator; who seems to have left these Matters entirely at large, to be adjusted according to the respective Customs, Modes, and Fashions of each Country, and People, so as there be nothing repugnant to the Duties of Morality therein;

therein. For, altho' we find that Mankind did, in the most early Ages, celebrate their religious Rejoicings, and Thanksgivings, in Festivals, Commemorative Feasts, or Sacrifices ; in Songs, Psalms, or Hymns ; in Instrumental Musick, Dancing, and the like ; which were approv'd by Heaven, as being aptly conducive to the respective Purpose, and no ways impugning any Moral Duty : Yet we don't find, that those special Acts were originally instituted, and enjoin'd by God, as universal Duties ; much less the particular Fashions, or Modes, of performing the same ; as neither being necessary, but even disagreeable, to the Purpose. For, what Custom has render'd *Habile*, fashionable, familiar, and agreeable, or (as 'tis usually term'd) decent, in one Place, or People, may seem altogether strange, uncouth, barbarous, indecent, and ridiculous in others ; and, consequently, unfit to represent, and communicate, the serious Affections of the Mind. And what Customs, and Fashions, may be very agreeable, commodious, and expedient, in one Country, may be very inconvenient, uneasy, and disagreeable in another : For Instance, how strange, and ridiculous amongst us, would seem the Posture of Prostration, by way of Humiliation, and Prayer ? The Posture of sitting cross-legg'd upon the Level, like Taylors ? Or lying reclin'd, at length, on Beds, at Meals and Festivals ? Yet, what more proper, decent, and agreeable, in
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their respective Times, and Places? Again; Should we not think a Man mad, that should, now, celebrate, or express his Grief, Sorrow, or Humiliation, upon any Occasion, after the antient *Hebrew* Mode, in Rags, in Dirt, and Squallidness of Body; for the Purpose, tearing his Cloaths, or Garments, smudging his Face, his Head, his Hands, and Body, with Dust, and Ashes, refusing to take Sustenance, in Sullenness, and Fasting, and the like? So, further, What is more agreeable, and expedient, in hot Climates, than their Customs of loose Garments, of frequent Washings, Bathings, and Anointings? And how incommodious, and disagreeable, would such Fashions be in cold ones? And, therefore, such particular Customs, and Fashions, are, by no Means, proper for universal Practice. Such Matters may be regulated by the particular Legislature of the respective Countries, or Nations; but were not, surely, instituted, originally, by Heaven, nor impos'd on Mankind, as Universal, or Catholick Duties: The different Regulations of such incidental Matters, usually being the distinguishing Ingredients of such Systems, as are vulgarly stiled, the National Religions of this, or that Country, or People.

XXXIX. Now these Four plainly Catholick, or Universal Duties, *viz.* those Two principal, and immediate Duties of Justice and Charity; and these Two secondary, subservient

servient Duties of religious Faith, and Worship, seem to have been the only fundamental Duties of the Catholick Religion, *viz.* the only, primitive, fix'd, steady, and invariable Duties, that have been of Religious and Catholick Obligation, ever from the first Existence of human Nature: Insomuch, that the whole System of the Catholick Religion, in its primitive, or first State, (*viz.* before the Institution of Heathenism, or Idolatry) consisted of these Four universal Duties only, *viz.* of Justice and Charity towards one another, universally; and of religious Faith, and Worship, towards our Creator only.

XL. THAT these Duties of Justice, Charity, religious Faith, and religious Worship, were of such Obligation, ever from the Beginning, may firmly be concluded, both from Reason, and from divine Authority; for that the Occasion, and Necessity thereof, with Respect both to the Nature of Mankind, and of God's Purpose in the Institution of the Catholick Religion, have been ever equally the same, even from the first Existence of human Nature; and must ever remain equally the same, so long as human Nature shall endure. This Law of universal Justice, Charity, and religious Trust in the Creator only (of which Trust, religious Worship is the natural Consequence) was plainly that Law of Righteousness, which was before the Days of *Moses*, which was observ'd by *Abraham*, which the

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Creator,

Creator, in the holy Scriptures, expressly calls his Laws; and for the due Observation of which, *Abraham* was so distinguish'dly bless'd, and favour'd by his Creator. These Duties, therefore, were plainly of such Obligation ever from the Beginning; and if no other Duty can be found to have been of such Obligation, ever from the Beginning, it may be no less firmly concluded, That the Duties of Justice and Charity towards one another universally; and religious Faith, and Worship towards our Creator only; are the only fundamental, the only primitive, steady, and invariable Duties of the Catholick Religion.

XLI. Now that religious Faith, and Worship, are but Secondary, and Ancillary Duties, as subservient only to those principal and immediate Duties of Religion, *viz.* to Justice and Charity, as Motives thereto only, and not otherwise, is manifest; for that Man's Faith, and Worship towards his Creator, were not made Duties by the Creator, for his own Sake; neither can the Faith, Worship, or any other Act of Man, any wise benefit, avail, or conduce, to the Happiness and Welfare of his Creator; but were made religious Duties meerly for the Sake of Mankind themselves: Neither can religious Faith, or Worship, of themselves alone, any wise conduce towards the Happiness and Welfare of Mankind, without the Intervention of Morality; nor can, at all, avail towards the sole, and constant

constant Purpose of the genuine Catholick Religion, *viz.* the Welfare, and Happiness of Society, otherwise than as Secondary Means, *viz.* as Motives, and by way of enforcing the due Observation of those Two principal, and immediate Duties of Justice and Charity; which, however produc'd, are, of their own Nature, immediately, and effectually available towards that constant, and only End of true Religion, the Welfare and Happiness of Society; and without which, no other Duty, whatsoever, can be of any Manner of Avail. Accordingly, the learned Apostle, in his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. 13, treating of Charity, (by which, in the Stile of the new Testament, is usually denoted Morality in general) he plainly declares, That, without Charity, nothing else, whatever, no not even the Gift of Prophecy, the Power of understanding Mysteries, the Practice of Almsgiving, not even Martyrdom itself, were of any Merit, or Avail; but all meerly idle, vain, and fruitless, as the useless Tinkling of a brazen Cymbal. And in the 13th Verse of the same Chapter, making the Comparison between Charity (or Morality) and religious Faith, (which is the only Ground, and Foundation of religious Worship) he expressly gives the Preference to Charity, as the greater, or more important Duty. And the Messiah likewise, from amongst all the Duties of Religion, singles out, and constitutes Charity, or mutual Benevolence

Benevolence, to be the distinguishing Badge, and Characteristick of his Disciples, saying, (*John*, Chap. 13, and Verse 35) *In this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.* And again, *St. Paul*, in his 13th Chapter to the *Romans*, Verses the 8th and 9th, summing up those Duties, the due Observation of which amounted to the Fullfilling, or Accomplishment of Religion; after reciting diverse particular Precepts concerning the general Duty of Justice, he declares, *That if there be any other Commandment, 'tis briefly comprehended in this Saying; namely, that thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And the Messiah (who would not, surely, return an imperfect, or insufficient Answer to a Question so material, and even of the highest Importance to the Welfare of Mankind; the sole and constant Purpose of Religion) being ask'd, *Matthew*, Chapter the 19th, and Verse the 16th, what were the Terms and Conditions of Salvation, and eternal Life; in Answer thereto, Verses the 18th and 19th, he lays down the Moral Duties of Justice and Charity, as the only Terms, or Conditions, necessary to Salvation, and eternal Life. So that, both from the Nature of Things, and from the Concurrence of the highest Authority, we may firmly conclude, that the Moral Duties of Justice and Charity are the only principal, and immediate Duties of the Catholick Religion; to which great Moral Duties, religious
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Faith and Worship are subservient, meerly as Motives, or Inforcements, and but as secondary Means to that sole and constant End of Genuine Religion, the common Welfare and Happiness of Mankind.

XLII. SUCH seems to have been the Nature, and genuine Constitution of the Catholick Religion; consisting only of those fundamental, and undoubtedly catholick, primitive, constant, and invariable Duties of Justice, Charity, religious Faith, and religious Worship; taken abstractedly both from such occasional Precepts and Ordinances, on one Hand, as God may have, in after-Times, given to Mankind, on some particular Occasions, with Regard to some particular, and occasional Ends and Purposes; which Kind of Precepts, and thence emerging Duties, were, manifestly, neither of Primitive Institution, nor of Catholick Obligation: And also, on t'other Hand, from the various Laws, Customs, and Usages, of various Nations, Ages, and Countries, as being, plainly, neither of Catholick Obligation, nor yet of Divine; but of meer human Institution; nor, indeed, of any steady and invariable Commodity and Perfection; but, in their own Nature, manifestly flux, and variable, at the Discretion of the respective Legislators, according to the Flux, and varying Circumstances, and Exigencies of the respective Communities. The Regulation of the outward Incidents, Manner, Modes, and

and Fashions of expressing, corporally, these our spiritual Regards of religious Faith and Worship towards our Creator ; together with the ordering all particular and occasional Institutions for the promoting, and inforcing, Private Justice, Moral Temperance, and Beneficence ; and the Offices, and Ceremonies, concerning the Administration of publick Justice, being, by our All-wise Creator, graciously left free and open to be adjusted and accommodated by the respective Legislatures of each Nation and Country, to the respective Circumstances, Exigencies, and Occasions of their respective Communities ; the particular Regulations of such Matters being, in their Nature, so flux, and variable, as not to be capable of being form'd into any System of such universal and invariable Perfection, as to be equally commodious and beneficial to all Nations, and in all Countries, Times, and Seasons alike ; and therefore no such System can be fit to be of universal and invariable Obligation ; nor hath any such System been originally, and invariably fix'd by any universal, and perpetual Decree of the Creator : Whence 'tis manifest, that such National Regulations, Customs, and Usages, concerning these kind of Matters, which are vulgarly, and improperly, call'd National Religions, as being meerly of human Institution, and but limited Obligation, according to the Jurisdiction of the respective Legislatures, from
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whence they sprung; ought, by no Means, to be put upon the same Level, and confounded with the sacred, and invariable Duties of the Catholick Religion, as arising from Precepts and Ordinances of Divine Institution, and Catholick Obligation; to, or from which, no human Authority can any wise either add, or diminish.

XLIII. S U C H, then, having been the Nature, and genuine Constitution of the Catholick Religion. As to primitive Practice, *viz.* the Practice, or Profession of the Antients, or Fathers of the most early Ages of Mankind, before the Institution of *Heathenism*, or Idolatry; that seems accordingly to have consisted of plain Morality; of a spontaneous unprescrib'd Trust and Confidence in the Justice and Goodness (as well as in the Wisdom and Power) of God, the common Father of Mankind, towards all his Children; and of the plain and artless Worship of their Creator, without any prescrib'd Rules, Forms, or Fashions of such Worship.

XLIV. N O R doth it any wise appear, that religious Worship was Originally under any partial Restriction, or exclusive Appropriation; but was truly *Catholick*, or universally free and open to all Mankind alike, without any partial Distinctions, or Discriminations of Mankind into Sacred and Profane, Hallow'd and Unhallow'd, Elect and Reprobate, Cleros and Laics, and the like. God
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being the common Father of all Mankind, had no Regard to Persons; all Men were equally his Children, and all had equally a Right of addressing themselves to him in Prayer and Thanksgiving; all had an equal Liberty of Contemplating their August Creator, and to express their grateful Sentiments and Submissions thereupon, by whatever (not Immoral) Acts their own Spirit spontaneously prompted them into, their Worship being meerly Natural, Disinterested, and Undesigning.

XLV. Now whether the Duties of Morality were reveal'd and enjoyn'd to the first Race of Mankind by the express Word of God, or only by the proper Light of Nature, *viz.* by natural Reason, their own Consciences (as *St. Paul* expresses it) shewing them what was Good, and what was Evil, doth not seem altogether certain; but that the many and gross Violations thereof were so displeasing to God, that he, therefore, once drowned the World, stands ascertain'd by express Revelation.

XLVI. THAT God did, in the Beginning, require Mankind to place any Hope, Trust, or Confidence in Him; or did require them in any wise to worship Him; or did reveal, and expressly direct and ordain of what Species, or Kind of Acts such Worship should consist; tho' it doth not appear that any divine Precept, Ordinance, or Revelation, concerning the same, was expressly deliver'd

liver'd to Mankind, either at the Creation or in the most early Ages of the World ; yet are we well assur'd, that God from the very Beginning did manifest, and make himself known to Mankind, not only by the Light of Nature, not only by the Inferences and Conclusions of natural Reason, from the visible Appearances of Nature, or divine Mechanism, but also by express Revelation to our first Parents.

XLVII. N o w religious Faith, or Trust in God, is so natural and unavoidable a Consequence of knowing God, that there seems no more Necessity, or Occasion for any express Precept to such Purpose, than for Precepts to enjoin Mankind to be sensible of the Light and Warmth of the Meridian Sun : For who can doubt the Power and Veracity of a Being Omnipotent, Omniscient, Impassionate, Immutable, and All-benevolent ; who neither can be deceiv'd, nor can be any wise tempted, or induc'd to deceive his Creatures ; and any of whose Purposes no adverse Chance, or Measures can, in any Degree, frustrate, or disappoint. Who then can doubt the Certainty, or of his Will, or of his Power, to effect whatever he had denounc'd, or should denounce.

XLVIII. S o likewise as nothing is more obvious and consentaneous to natural Reason, than for Man to address himself by Prayer and Supplications to a Being, in whose Power

he knows it is to remedy his Complaints, and to relieve his Wants, and likewise for him to return Thanks and Praises for Benefits and Blessings receiv'd ; 'tis more than probable that God was spontaneously worshipp'd with Supplications and Thanksgivings, even from the first Existence of Mankind. Supplications and Thanksgivings, from Man to God, being so natural a Consequence, and result of free and unprejudic'd Reason ; that there seems to have been no more Occasion for any express Ordinance, or Precept, for such Purpose, than to direct Mankind to complain when hurt, or to rejoyce when pleas'd.

XLXIX. SUPPLICATIONS, therefore, and Thanksgivings were the Genuine and only Acts of religious Worship, in practice amongst Mankind, in the most early Times ; 'till human Understanding was so captivated and deprav'd by the Delusions of Idolatry and Priest-craft, as to imagine, that God could stand in need of the Service, Aid, and Assistance of Mankind ; that he could want, covet, and desire the Wealth and Substance of poor Mortals ; that his Favour might be purchas'd, and his Justice partially byass'd by Presents, Gifts, and Offerings ; that all Offences before his Tribunal might be expiated ; his Vengeance brib'd, soften'd, and atton'd ; his Wrath propitiated and turn'd to Favour, thro' the corrupt Influence of Corporeal Sacrifices, Gifts, and Offerings, the wretched

wretched Bounties of poor needy Mortals to their Omnipotent Creator : A Notion not only dishonourable and unworthy of, but also repugnant to the universally allow'd Essence and undisputed Attributes of the August Creator. But Prayer and Thanksgiving, Offerings meerly Spiritual, meer Acts of the Mind, or Spirit, were no wise unsuitable to the Essence of a Spiritual Self-sufficient Being, but have been afterwards approv'd of even by exprefs Revelation.

L. As to the Modes and Fashions of celebrating, or performing those Acts of religious Worship in those ealier Ages of Mankind, it seems to have been a very antient and general Custom of all Ages (and still in Use to this Day) at their Feastivals, to commemorate such Events as they deem'd Fortunate, Successful, and Pleasing to them; thereby exhilarating their Thoughts, and rejoicing their Minds, with a pleasing Review of such past Events, as when present were most delightful to them : So likewise was it Customary at such Feasts and Rejoycings, gratefully to commemorate their absent Friends and Benefactors; and, particularly, such as they esteem'd the Authors of those so grateful and pleasing Events, or Blessings; whose Praises, together with the Detail of the Benefits from them receiv'd, they us'd to recite in Hymns, Songs, and Poems, and such like chearful Acknowledgments and Testifications of Gratitude

titude and Joy ; which probably might be the first Spring and Rise of Poetry, or Versification.

LI. Now as the former Branch of this general Custom is meerly natural, so is the other altogether Moral and Commendable, as promoting Friendship, Gratitude, and mutual good Offices amongst Mankind : And as this has been the customary Usage of all Ages, with regard to their Benefactors in general ; so particularly, with respect to the universal Benefactor of Mankind, the August Creator, it seems to have been the general Custom of the first Ages, for each Father, or Master of a Family, upon the Encrease of his Flocks and Herds, and upon the Gathering in the Fruits of the Earth, to dedicate, or set apart, some Share, or Portion of their Stores, to be spent by him with his Domesticks, and such occasional Guests as he might admit, or invite thereto, in Feasts of Rejoycings, Praises, Thanksgivings, and grateful Acknowledgments, to be offer'd up to the divine Author of those Blessings ; the *Pater-Familias* being the Master of the Feast, and sole Conductor of the Solemnity.

LII. SUCH seem to have been these solemn Feasts, or Sacrifices, perform'd in Honour of the Almighty by *Cain* and *Abel*, the first Offspring of our Common Parents. And such, probably, were the Sacrifices perform'd by *Melchizedeck*, King of *Salem*, who had either
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(with his Predecessors) kept his Subjects from degenerating into Idolatry, with which the Neighbouring Nations were then almost universally corrupted ; or had reform'd them therefrom, and had re-apply'd these Acts of religious Worship to the Creator of the World ; wherefore, with Allusion to the *Heathen* Priesthood, he is by a very familiar Allegory, styl'd the Priest of the living God ; it no wise appearing, that God had then, by any express Revelation, instituted any Forms of Sacrifices, or holy Feasts, or appropriated the Conduct and Performance thereof to any exclusive Company, or select Priesthood : The *Pater-Familias* having still, even at that Day, the sole Conduct and Performance of the Sacrifice, whenever the same was apply'd to the living God ; as manifestly appears in the Case of his Contemporary, the Patriarch *Abraham*.

LIII. SUCH then as abovesaid being the religious Feasts, or Sacrifices of the first Ages : And as the warmer Regions of *Asia* seem to have been the first inhabited, the People generally dwelling in small portable Tents, or Pavilions, not capable of containing many Persons together ; therefore, these Feasts were usually celebrated, or perform'd within the Shade of some commodious Grove, or of some thick spreading Tree, to shelter the Guests and Performers from the Heat of the Sun, where they prepar'd the Banquet upon some little Hillock, or rising Ground, either form'd
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by Nature, or made up for that Purpose; and from its Posture term'd, or call'd the Altar, or High-place, as being rais'd above the Level of the Circumjacent Surface; around which Mount, or Altar, the Guests were dispos'd to partake of the Entertainment, sitting, lying, standing, and some Times dancing to their Hymns, Songs, and other Musick, in such Manner as the Master of the Feast did occasionally direct, or their own Fancy, or Conveniency prompt; and these Groves, or Trees, under whose Shade and Shelter the Neighbouring Inhabitants did use to celebrate these Solemn Feasts, being usually the most Convenient that could be found for Shade and Water, being generally situate near some Spring, or running Stream of sweet and wholesome Water, were therefore deem'd Sacred and Inviolable; which might not without giving publick Offence, be cut down, destroy'd, or any wise endamag'd; but were by Common Consent to be preserv'd for the Use of the Publick, as being the most Commodious for that peculiar Purpose: When, therefore, any such Tree, Grove, or Fountain was by the Common Consent of the Neighbourhood dedicated, allotted, and set apart for such publick Use and Purpose, then was it said to be Hallow'd, Holy, or Establish'd; as being Establish'd by Common Consent for that peculiar Purpose; and was also deem'd Sacred and Inviolable, as being of publick Use and Concern;

Concern ; such being the genuine Significations of the Words *Sacrum*, and *Sanctum*, or *Sancticaum*, *id est*, what hath obtain'd a Sanction, or Establishment. Such, therefore, seems to have been the Original Notion of holy, or hallow'd and sacred Trees, Groves, Fountains, and other Places ; which the People were taught to regard with a religious Awe ; the more effectually to deter them from any Damage, or Violation thereof.

LIV. S U C H seems to have been the publick Manner of religious Thanksgiving, in Use amongst the first Race of Mankind : And as their religious Supplications seems to have been offer'd up in a more private, solitary, and unsolemn Manner ; therefore, these Thanksgiving-Feasts seem to have been the only publick Kind of Solemnity that was esteem'd Religious ; and was, therefore, by way of Singularity term'd the sacred Solemnity, the sacred Act, or Fact, the *Sacrum Factum*, or *Sacrificium*, according to the *Latin* Tongue.

LV. N O W tho' it doth not appear that those Thanksgiving-Feasts were originally instituted, directed, or ordain'd by any express Precept, or divine Revelation ; yet being Reasonable, Innocent, and Inoffensive in their own Nature, they seem to have been well approv'd by God, in their primitive State and Use, 'till they were corrupted, abus'd, and prostituted, to serve the Immoral Knavish Pernicious Ends of Priesthood and Idolatry ;

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which was the Reason plainly why sacred Idols, or Images, sacred Groves, and High-Places, or Altars, are spoken of with so much Detestation in the Holy Scriptures; and why Idolatry, or the multiplying Objects of religious Worship are so expressly interdicted.

LVI. T H U S plain, simple, and disinterested; thus natural, thus universally, and impartially Beneficial to all Mankind alike; thus manifestly and effectually Conducive to that great End and Purpose of all true Religion, the common Welfare and Happiness of Mankind, and entirely congruous to the disinterested and impartial Justice and Goodness of the Creator, was the primitive, or original State of Religion in the first Ages of Mankind, before the Institution of *Heathenism*, or Idolatry, when first the Menage of religious Worship was engross'd and enclos'd, as of peculiar and exclusive Property and Right; and when first Religion's sacred Name was prostituted to give a Sanction to the Knavish Fictions and Devices of Crafty and Self-ended Men, and made a meer Engine of Revenue and Dominion, a meer Device to serve the partial Ends of Sacerdotal Avarice, Ambition, and Revenge.

LVII. T H U S both from the Practice of the Antients in the most early Ages of human Nature, from the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and from the fairest Conclusions of Reason upon the Nature of Mankind, and the
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uncontested Attributes of God ; it plainly appears, that the whole Will of God to which he requir'd the Obedience of Mankind ; and, consequently, the whole Sum of Man's Religious Duty, did originally consist of those four only *Catholick* Duties of Justice and Charity towards one another universally, and religious Faith, and Worship towards their Creator only ; and which four undoubtedly *Catholick* Duties, were by God's Eternally Immutable, and Invariable Will, fix'd and establish'd, as the only necessary Terms, or Conditions of Salvation, and Eternal Life ; the due Observance of which, was the compleat keeping and fulfilling of God's Law, and the compleat Doing and Accomplishment of his sacred Will.

LVIII. Now as to the Question, whether God in any after-Times did institute, or authorize any new Religion, any new System of divine Precepts, and thence emerging Duties, whether of particular, or of *Catholick* Obligation : As the *Hebrew* Nation were the only People, who could on any colourable Grounds pretend, that God, the Common Father of Mankind, had, through a peculiar Degree of Favour towards their Nation, vouchsafed to give them a National Religion, a System of divine Precepts peculiarly adapted, accommodated, and adjusted to the particular Genius, Circumstances, and Occasions of their Nations ; we shall therefore refer the Consi-

deration of that Part of the Question which concerns the Notion of National Religions, 'till we come in Course to treat of the *Mosaick* System, in the third Stage of Religion, after the Institution and Establishment of *Heathenism*, or Idolatry, almost universally throughout the World. As to the other Branch of the Question, *viz.* whether the Creator did in any after-Times institute, or authorize any new Religion, any new System of religious Duties of *Catholick* Obligation, or any wise change, or alter those Terms, or Conditions of Salvation and Eternal Life, which in the Beginning he had instituted, approv'd, and establish'd; as nothing can be a plainer and surer Indication of the Imperfection of any Institution than the admitting it to be capable of Amendment, of any Change, or Alteration for the better : And as nothing can be more inconsistent with the Infinite and All-perfect Wisdom and Knowledge of the Creator, than the Supposition, that any Means which he had instituted and approv'd, as both necessary and sufficient to his Purpose, should afterwards be found so Imperfect and Ineffectual, as to need, or require any Addition, any Diminution, any Change, or Alteration for the better ; (what is Compleat and Perfect plainly, neither requiring, or admitting of any Amendment whatsoever,) so nothing can be more discreditable to the Notion of Religion, nothing can render the Truth, the Guinefs

nuiness and Sincerity thereof more reasonably
 suspected than the Supposal of its being sub-
 ject to, and well capable of Change, of Al-
 teration and Amendment : For as God's Infi-
 nite Wisdom could not be deceiv'd, nor any
 wise mistaken in the Goodness and Efficacy of
 those Duties, which he had universally en-
 join'd to all Mankind, as both necessary and
 sufficient to their common Welfare and Hap-
 piness ; and had therefore fix'd and establish'd
 the same as the certain Terms, or Conditions
 of their Salvation, and Eternal Life : And as
 the Nature, Tendency, and Efficacy of these
 originally *Catholick* Duties are still, and have
 ever been invariably the same, it cannot with-
 out the utmost Absurdity be suppos'd, that
 God (like to frail Man) should change his
 Mind, should repent of what he had so wisely
 and so perfectly done ; or any wise change, or
 alter what could in no wise be better'd, or
 amended. From which Considerations we
 may firmly conclude, that our All-wise, as
 well as All-gracious Creator, hath never in-
 stituted, or authoriz'd any new *Catholick* Re-
 ligion, any other System of *Catholick* Duties,
 or any wise chang'd, or alter'd those Condi-
 tions of Man's Salvation and Eternal Life,
 which he had once approv'd, fix'd, and esta-
 blish'd, as both necessary and sufficient thereto.

LIX. Now as the genuine Duties of the
Catholick Religion have been both in Quantity
 and Kind ever invariably the same, and the
Catholick

Catholick Obligation of these Duties, ever equally and invariably the same; it follows, that the *Catholick* Religion is not really capable of any Alteration, otherwise than first, either by way of Corruption, *viz.* by blending, confounding, and adulterating the same with spurious Mixtures of foreign Matters, that are no genuine Ingredients thereof; or by way of spurious Substitutions, *viz.* by setting up other Institutions in the Stead thereof, on one Hand: Or secondly, on t'other Hand, by way of suppressing and purging away those spurious Mixtures and Substitutions, and thereby reforming and restoring that *Catholick* System to its primitive Purity, Simplicity, and Efficacy: No human Power, or Authority whatsoever being capable of creating any new Duty of religious and *Catholick* Obligation, or of changing, or altering the Conditions either of their own, or other Men's Salvation, any more then they can be capable of surpassing the infinite Wisdom, and changing, or altering the eternal Will of their Creator.

LX. ACCORDINGLY, tho' not only the Practice, but also the very Notion, and primitive Constitution of the *Catholick* Religion was first most abominably corrupted by the impure Mixture and Imposition of *Heathenish* Devices for religious Duties; and at length almost universally suppress'd by the Substitution and Predominancy of Idolatry and Priest-craft through the World; insomuch
that

that all Notion and Memory of the Creator himself was almost totally extinguish'd from the Face of the whole Earth, thro' the fatal Artifices and Delusions, and the much more fatal Persecutions and inexorable Cruelties of the *Heathen* Priesthood; the Name and Memory of the Creator remaining no longer unextinguish'd amongst any other Nation, or People, save amongst the Posterity of *Jacob* only; amongst whom nor Priest, nor Idol yet was found, even to their Deliverance out of *Ægypt*. Now, tho' there was such apparent Occasion for the Interposition of divine Revelation, to reform Mankind, and to suppress such gross Abominations, as then had almost universally usurp'd Religion's sacred Name and Stead, yet was it no wise necessary for that Purpose, to set up, or institute any new Religion: Neither could it be any wise consistent with the infinite Wisdom of God, to put it in the Power, either of Men, or even of Angels, to undo any Thing that he himself had done; or any wise to change, or alter those Conditions of Man's Salvation, which he himself had instituted, approv'd, and establish'd: Nor doth it any wise appear, that the Prophet *Moses*, the blessed Messiah, or any other divinely authoriz'd Person, ever had it in Commission from God, to set up, or institute any new Religion, any new System of religious Duties, any wise variant from what had been the original and eternally,
immu-

immutable and invariable Will of the All-wise, as well as All-gracious Creator; but only to purge, reform, and restore what had been *Catholick* Duties, even from the Beginning. Nor was it possible that the Messiah, to whom his heavenly Father had so perfectly reveal'd his Eternal Will, and to which he so constantly profess'd perfect Submission and Obedience, could any wise vary, or deviate in his Precepts therefrom; his Precepts perfectly co-inciding with those genuine Duties which were of *Catholick* Obligation, ever from the Beginning; as will more fully appear upon the due Contemplation of the third and fourth Stages of the *Catholick* Religion; where we shall find the Reformation wrought by *Moses* to be but Partial and Defective; but that by the Messiah, General and Compleat; *Moses* plainly attempting nothing farther, than to reform his own Nation, the *Hebrews*, from the Abominations and Absurdities of *Heathenism* (which had become familiar to them by the constant Practice of the *Agyptians*, amongst whom they so long had dwelt) nor affecting even that compleatly, as being oblig'd to indulge the *Hebrews*, by Reason of the Hardness of their Hearts, in most of the grossest Absurdities of *Heathenism* for a Time, even 'till the Coming of the Messiah; who, by weeding out the Tares that choak'd the Wheat; and plucking up quite by the Roots whatever Plant his Father had not planted; did

did thereby perfectly reform and restore the *Catholick* Religion, reducing it plainly to its primitive Purity, Simplicity, and full Efficacy, towards the common Benefit and Welfare of all Mankind equally alike; of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, Rich and Poor, Learn'd and Illiterate, Wise and Simple, all alike; without any Exception, or Respect, either of Nations, or Persons; in a Manner perfectly Impartial and *Catholick*: Whence it plainly appears, that Religion Genuine and Uncorrupt, is ever immutably and invariably the same.

F I N I S.



did thereby greatly enrich and improve the
 Christian Religion, and in doing so he has
 Primitive Truth, simplicity, and holiness,
 towards the common people, and in doing so
 all mankind, by the spirit of Jesus Christ,
 true, Rich and poor, learned and unlearned,
 Wise and Simple, all alike; and in doing so
 correction, or reproof, of the many errors of
 Heretics; in a manner pure, and without
 Guile: Whence it plainly appears, that
 Religion Genuine and Unmixed, is necessary
 morally and inevitably to the State.

F I N I S



